

## **EC-1: "Eco-Socialism and Climate" [in English]**

**Saturday 15 October, 15.15–16.45, Sandler**

### ***Ionnis Rigkos: "Democracy, the Autonomous Struggle for Achieving Sustainability"***

*(Master in Human Ecology, Lund University)*

This is a transdisciplinary PhD project, a critical research, that deals with the question of how and why the civilizations of modernity construct social realities that fundamentally and institutionally are socio-politically unequal, unsustainable and that ecologically reproduce unequal exchange of human, social and environmental resources and information. Moreover, it tries to position an alternative pathway for radical and democratic transformation through a critical reformulation of "the project of autonomy" connected with the struggle for the commons. This PhD project is both theoretical and practical; a qualitative and quantitative analysis of primary and secondary data collected from a case study in Skouries of Halkidiki, Greece. Thus, this project aims not only to develop the struggle of democratic movements, but also to expose the endless possibilities humanity have, to re-imagine an autonomous present that can lead to a sustainable future. Following the conferences' plan, I can trace my primarily focus on the main sections of "Capitalism 2050", "Eco-socialism and Climate" and "Critical theories, platforms and movements".

### ***Elmar Flatschart: "The socio-ecological crisis and the state: Lessons from the German state-derivation debate"***

*(Ph.D., Lecturer at the Department of International Development, University of Vienna)*

Eco-Marxism is certainly amongst the most vibrantly debated expansions of 'original' historical materialism. It brings nature into a very 'socially-oriented' paradigm and as such helps us to understand how debates about natural limits are socially mediated and indeed relevant for what is best grasped as a combined societal and ecological crisis.

The German scholarship on these issues is rich and especially draws on the Frankfurt-School tradition and its theorization of society-nature relations. It elucidates the peculiarity of the 'logic of mediation' between substance and form in modern patriarchal Capitalism and is able to link them to sophisticated crisis-theoretical accounts as the work of Ulrich Brand, Christoph Görg or Elmar Altvater has shown.

While this scholarship shares with the broader German debate a special attention for economic form-analysis, it has not yet sufficiently endeavoured to link form-analytical state theory with questions of the socio-ecological crisis.

In my paper, I will argue that a closer look at the German state derivation debate and its assumptions on the form-induced limits of state intervention are of very great interest for studies of the combined societal and ecological crisis. This considers the fact even the most sophisticated Eco-Marxist accounts of the relation between 'substantial' and 'formal'

aspects of crisis tend to externalize the state/the political. It is seen as an agent of salvation that can bring about change or is at least approached as a (neutral) terrain for struggles about environmental and economic issues. The German state derivation debate has convincingly shown that is necessary to see the state as expression of the political form, which is itself closely related to the economic form (and as we would say: the broader society-nature relations it facilitates).

Although the political realm produces the impressions of contingency and manipulability, the state is not 'outside' of the crisis, but it is part of it. As such, it is liable to systemic limits that are the result of the form-genesis and thus yielding activity limits for emancipatory transformation. I will argue that this can fruitfully be applied to issues of the combined societal and ecological crisis like the question of the (form-immanent) possibility of a transition to a non-fossil energy system.

***Davor Mujezinovic: "Marxist ecological economics in theory and practice: industrial metabolic rifts and unequal ecological exchange"***

*(Doctoral student, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University)*

This presentation will be based on my PhD project, which deals with the global stream of e-waste and the social and environmental consequences of the same. My intention is to present the theoretical framework I am using, which represents an advancement of currently existing models of Marxian ecological economics. As such it builds mainly on the work of Burkett and Foster on the development of Marxian ecological economics, but also more generally on critical approaches to political ecology and environmental conflicts, such as those of Martinez-Alier.

As Foster, Burkett and others have shown, elements crucial to understanding the nature of capitalism, such as the drive towards growth, the source of profit as well as other mechanisms and forces that are endemic to it, are missed by mainstream ecological economics. This shortcoming weakens both the explanatory and predictive power of the theory. A synthesis with the concepts, tools and categories of the Marxian tradition allows for an expanded and more accurate analysis. Yet there are areas of such a Marxian ecological economics that remain underdeveloped.

I intend to outline my development of a socially and politico-economically embedded Material Flows Analysis, based on a materialist dialectic approach, which hence combines Marxist and industrial economic approaches to the study of metabolism and bridges a major gap in the existing research. I also include the kind of combination of unequal ecological exchange and metabolic rift analysis that was first suggested by Foster and Hollman, which in my framework is more fully developed with a clear practical application in mind. Lastly, I maintain a continuous focus on class relations in order to highlight the ecosystem as a site of class struggle.

**Lauri Lahikainen: "Climate Change and the Irresponsible Elite: Epistemological and Practical Perspectives"**

*(Doctoral student, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Tampere)*

According to a Richard Heede (2014) two thirds of Greenhouse gas emissions can be traced to only 90 companies. These companies are hierarchically structured, many of their senior decision makers know each other, and one person may serve in the board of more than one of them. These people through their connections and financial resources, can also influence the policies of nation states. However, the global elite have done very little to use their influence positively in the climate change mitigation efforts. Some of them have even funded think tanks that produce climate denialist propaganda.

Recent research suggest that the elite tend to take environmental problems less seriously than others, be averse to systems thinking, be unconcerned with long term consequences and empathize less with distant others. In terms of environmental virtue ethics and epistemology, the elite tend to have vices rather the virtues needed for being responsible agents concerning climate change. Since high achievers tend to be respected and imitated, many non-elite individuals may be vulnerable for similar corruption.

In my paper I will suggest that Marxist and Gramscian concepts can illuminate the contradictory position of the elite, where despite having most resources and the best access to knowledge the elite position seems to form bad doxastic agents. Marx argued that a capitalist is "capital personified [and] capital has one single life impulse, the tendency to create value and surplus-value." In performing the imperatives of capital and viewing the world through that imperative, the capitalist will have to disregard as "externalities" the pernicious effects of accumulation on the planet. This is intensified in financial capitalism, where economic decisions are further removed from their material effects. Gramscian hegemony theory, in turn, can help us understand how the perspective of the elite gets disseminated and taken up in society at large, and how it can be opposed. The criticism of the elite epistemology may also show, through "the labor of the negative", what alternative ways of knowing might look like.